Don't know why, but I have never been an “afraid” guy. Don't misunderstand, never has “I'm not afraid of anything” passed my lips because that's not true. What I mean is that circumstances don't strike fear in my heart. Somewhere along the line; family, a life of athletics, raising kids, struggling with algebra, I can't be sure, but when different circumstances arise, my sense is that an opportunity, not a moment to be afraid has arisen.

Because of that hardwiring, when a colleague called a month ago and said “Aren't you afraid of all this?”, sensing her spirit of panic should not be dismissed out of hand, we talked and prayed. Both our understandings of what COVID-19 can and will do were widened.

Everyone comes at this crisis differently. It seems so easy for a person to be gripped with fear. COVID-19 is everywhere we look, in the air we breathe, in every physical contact and around every corner seemingly wanting to infect us. It has bored itself into our psyche and impacted every single thing we are a part of – work, family (writes a grandpa who hasn't seen grandkids in nearly two months), where and what we eat, how we play and with whom, how much TP we can have – and let's be honest – once you get to that level, it has affected everything.

Given that, it seems easy to panic. Maybe we each have had a moment or two of that, for which no one should be shamed. Yes, we are mostly having first world problems, but that is all we know. So, let's not be hard on ourselves or others for a few incidents of panic, and, let's not camp out there.

COVID-19 is giving all of us the opportunity to discern, to think through “What exactly is happening here and how should I approach it?” This seems the perfect opportunity for us to react with faith not fear. Fear is a common emotion many experience and it cannot be allowed to overpower us. Faith is meant to overcome fears and it is in moments of fear we are to ask the Lord to increase our faith. Surely Jesus is in control of this situation and will guide us through it. These are moments to trust and believe, to have faith not fear.

Biblically, faith and fear cannot exist together. Faith is described in Hebrews 11:1 as being “certain of what we do not see.” It is an absolute belief that God is constantly working behind the scenes in every area of our lives, even when there is no tangible evidence to support that fact.

On the other hand, fear, simply stated, is unbelief or weak belief. As unbelief gains the upper hand in our thoughts, fear takes hold of our emotions. Our deliverance from fear and worry is based on faith, which is the very opposite of unbelief.

God is kind and understanding toward our weaknesses, but He requires us to go forward in faith, and the Bible is clear that faith does not mature and strengthen without trials. Adversity is God's most effective tool to develop a strong faith. That pattern is evident in Scripture. God takes each one of us through fearful situations, and, as we learn to obey God's Word and allow it to saturate our thoughts, we find each trial becomes a stepping stone to a stronger and deeper faith.

The Christian's faith is a confident assurance in a God who loves us, knows our thoughts, and cares about our deepest needs. That faith continues to grow as we study the Bible and learn the attributes of His amazing character. The more we learn about God, the more we can see Him working in our lives and the stronger our faith grows.

COVID-19 has been, is and will be very difficult for every single person who is reading this. Each will be affected because we, someone we know or love, is sick, tending to the sick, has lost their job or is struggling greatly because of this widespread and ruthless virus. This is a hard time, it simply is. We can wash our hands, wear facemasks and gloves. We can be frustrated, aggravated, and deeply concerned about it, but let's not be afraid of the circumstance.

These are the days to say, “because of God – because God is – because God loves – because God is sovereign in my life, I choose faith as this pandemic continues to unfold.”

These are the days to say, “I will seek God's answers for my questions, His Word for my discernment.”

These are the days to say, “I see you fear, but I have made my decision, I will be faithful to God and you are dismissed.”

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What have we Learned from COVID-19: Faith and Fear

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CONTACT US:
Scriptures that Comfort Church Members

Last week, Pastor Mike asked you to share some of the scriptures that “comfort” you. Here are some that you have sent. We pray that these will inspire comfort in some of you that are needing a Holy Spirit boost right now.

Lee and Elaine Coppock Psalm 27:13-14 Passion Bible “Yet I totally trust You to rescue me one more time, so I can see once again how good You are while I am still alive! Here’s what I’ve learned through it all: don’t give up; don’t be impatient; be entwined as one with the Lord. Be brave and courageous, and never lose hope. Yes, keep on waiting - for He will never disappoint you!”

Linda Morrison Proverbs 19:21 “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established”

Gene and Lois Novak Psalm 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God…”

Sandy Schneekloth Isaiah 41:10 “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Ruth Collins Psalm 23:1-3 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Michael Ransom Psalm 93 1 The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.

Ronda Moody Matthew 6:25-26 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

Marc and Charisse Lawrence Isaiah 41:10 Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

Pastoral Care Corner – Loss in a Pandemic

One of the MM Care Ministry programs that I’m especially proud of is GriefShare. In the last 13 years, it has been offered consistently and has been a source of healing and restoration for those going through the grieving process. A tremendous amount of valuable information is presented during GriefShare that aids in the healing process. The types of losses are many, but the emotions experienced and issues encountered by the participants are very similar.

The situation we’re in right now is producing its own kind of unique loss. For example, our 4:12 students are experiencing a great deal of loss right now – Summer Games has been cancelled, the seniors in the group will not have a ceremony, graduation parties or be able to take those memorable pictures together in their caps and gowns. Worst of all, they can’t be together to mourn their losses. Anyone suffering a loss of any kind will only heal if they acknowledge their loss and work through the process of healing.

Our losses in this pandemic revolve around:
- Isolation
- Financial concerns
- Time lost with extended family
- Worries about health for yourself or loved ones
- Drastic changes in routine
- Fears for the future and much more

These losses lead to behaviors quite common to grief such as irritability, anxiety, loss of focus and concentration, disruption in sleep – too much or not enough, lethargy or overactivity, and problems with eating, too much or not enough. We may think we’re handling things well one moment, then feel like we have no control at all the next.

There’s no magic answer for working through our loss, but consider these pointers from GriefShare:
- Acknowledge and understand your own grief – call it what it is and try to learn more.
- Allow your grief to be recognized by others – share your fears, concerns and worries.
- Feel free to grieve in your own unique way – find something that brings peace to your soul.
- Tell your story to others (the honest account of your loss).
- If you have found or received comfort share that with others in need.
- Trust God and cling to Him. Bring all your questions, fears and feelings honestly to Him.

And I would add, reach out to myself, Pastor Mike, or a friend, loved one or member of the church family that you trust and feel comfortable with. Don’t try and do this alone.

Blessings,
Vicki
Do you remember when May Baskets were a “thing?”

As a child, May Basket day ranked second only to Halloween in candy receipts for kids though there are several differences between the two. Halloween celebrated the dark side of life, was held in the dark and could sometimes be scary. May Basket Day celebrated the light side of life, emphatically embracing innocence, was always held in the light and was only scary if the neighborhood girl you were crushing on caught you and tried to kiss you.

There are a number of legends as to how this became a custom, but since the internet doesn't really give a definitive history it is likely just to be a folk custom. Sadly, this once sweet and widespread rite of spring has pretty much gone dormant.

We support a renewal of the May Basket effort. We support it by commercializing it and thus requiring us to buy more trinkets for kids, spouse and friends. In these moments of physical distancing, the May Basket can be a simple reminder to friends and neighbors that they are loved and cared for. Just make one, ring the bell and saunter away, as long as you are not “caught and kissed” physical distancing will be abided.

We hope you will make a couple “baskets” filled with fun things and the emblem below, and safely deliver them.

Elements the internet suggests for a May basket in this time.
- Roll of toilet paper
- Favorite prepackaged snack
- Hand sanitizer
- Gift card for drive up food
- Face Mask
- Box of microwave popcorn
- Etc…

May Basket Day – Reborn?

As spring continues to get closer, our landscape project to the West of the church now has additional seating. We have a pair of benches installed that will provide a place to sit and relax. The bench pictured is easily accessible because it has a zero grade access all the way from the west church exit. As the ground temperature increases the grass will be seeded and the shade sails installed.

DEATHS:
April 25: Jip Fleming

CELEBRATIONS:
Betty Hoffman will be celebrating her 95th birthday on May 4th. Please join in a card shower to bless her with greetings on this special day. She will love hearing from you!

Betty’s address is:
3505 English Glen Ave. #236
Marion, IA  52302
Blood Drive
Did you know that 25 of the 29 donors to the blood drive at the church last Tuesday were members of Marion Methodist? This means that we are both helping and necessary! So, sign up now to donate to our May 18th drive if you haven't donated since March 23rd. This is of vital importance at this time.

Stewardship
Alternative ways to give during this time
1. Mail offering to:
   Marion Methodist Church
   1298 7th Avenue
   Marion, IA 52302
2. Give online at www.MarionMethodist.org/give
3. Text offering to 319-313-5359
   Include $ Amount and ministry code

Text to give Ministry Codes:
- Operating Budget   Text GEN
- Transform Campaign Text TRANSFORM

LIVESTREAM SCHEDULE

Wednesday Nights at Marion Methodist
6:00 pm  Christian Education Lesson for Children (and Parents) led by Dani Showalter, Director of Children's Discipleship
6:30 pm  Pastoral Message and Bible Study led by Pastor Mike Morgan
7:30 pm  4:12 Student Ministries led by Kelsie DeReus, Director of Youth and Connectional Missions and 4:12 Leadership Team

Sunday Morning
10:15 am  Live Worship with Children's Education Moment

Watch online at www.marionmethodist.org/watch-live or subscribe to our YouTube Channel www.YouTube.com/MarionMethodistChurch

Easter Offering
$5,900 to Marion Cares
$5,900 to Marion Senior Living

Happy May Basket Day from your friends at Marion Methodist Church. Enjoy this basket knowing you are loved by the Lord, the Church and your friends.